



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

Contact: Kevin Kelly

Phone: (573) 751-9300

Governor Office Building, Suite 900

FY-04-207

PSC APPROVES AGREEMENT AUTHORIZING FIRST 2-1-1 INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE PROVIDER IN MISSOURI

Jefferson City (June 8, 2004)---The Missouri Public Service Commission has approved an agreement which authorizes the Heart of America United Way, Inc. to provide 2-1-1 service in SBC Missouri exchanges in 16 western Missouri counties (Andrew, Buchanan, DeKalb, Clinton, Caldwell, Platte, Clay, Ray, Jackson, Lafayette, Cass, Johnson, Saline, Pettis, Bates and Henry). With approval of this agreement, the Heart of America United Way, Inc. becomes the first agency to provide information and referral services via 2-1-1 in Missouri.

The agreement approved by the Commission was submitted by the Heart of America United Way, Inc., the Office of the Public Counsel, the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission, Green Hills Telephone Corporation, Citizens Telephone Company of Higginsville, Cass County Telephone, Lathrop Telephone Company and KLM Telephone Company. The agreement was reached as a result of negotiations conducted by the above parties. The Office of the Public Counsel is a separate state agency which represents the general public in matters before the Public Service Commission.

The Commission's order approving the agreement states: "After reviewing the unanimous stipulation and agreement and Staff's (PSC Staff) suggestions in support, the Commission finds that the stipulation and agreement filed on May 25 should be approved. The Commission notes that the parties have applied the standards and criteria set forth in Emergency Rule 4 CSR 240-32.200 in determining whether the Heart of America United Way's application should be approved."

The Commission noted in its order that as a service, 2-1-1 is a comprehensive information and referral program that responds to callers' non-emergency inquiries 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The 2-1-1 dialing code is known primarily for connecting people with health and human service referrals for every day needs. It also serves as a vital coordinating point and follow-up to organizations that provide first line response during local, regional or national emergencies or disasters. It also centralizes the community's system for recruiting and connecting individuals who wish to volunteer their time or donate goods to non-profit organizations.

In February 2004, the Public Service Commission approved and filed with the Secretary of State an emergency rule providing the framework for establishing 2-1-1 telecommunications service in Missouri. The emergency rule also contains requirements for an organization to be designated as a 2-1-1 provider.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) previously designated 2-1-1 as a national abbreviated dialing code for community information and referral services. The intent is to provide callers with direct access to organizations capable of making referrals to services such as housing assistance, counseling and hospice services that are not currently available through the 911 emergency code.

In order for 2-1-1 service to be provided in an area of the state, the information and referral service provider would need to file an application and have that application acted upon by the Public Service Commission.

Under the emergency rule, a customer will not be charged by either the telephone company or the 2-1-1 provider for using the service.

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